

**Office of the National Coordinator for
Health Information Technology
Major Initiatives
November 22, 2005**

Last year, President Bush called for the widespread use of electronic health records (EHRs) within 10 years. Despite the demonstrated benefits to care delivery, studies have found use of EHRs remains low among physicians, hospitals and other health care providers. The National Coordinator for Health Information Technology has set the foundation for adoption of interoperable EHRs through the following major initiatives:

1. American Health Information Community

The American Health Information Community (the Community), chaired by Secretary Mike Leavitt, was convened to guide the country's effort to achieve the President's goal of having most Americans using interoperable electronic health records within 10 years. Sixteen Commissioners were selected to represent the diverse stakeholder of healthcare and health information technology. The Community is reviewing five potential breakthroughs that will create realizable benefits to consumers in two to three years. Potential breakthroughs include: consumer empowerment, quality, chronic disease, e-prescribing, and bio-surveillance.

2. Standards Harmonization Process

HHS awarded a contract valued at \$3.3 million to the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), a non-profit organization that administers and coordinates the U.S. voluntary standardization activities, to convene the Health Information Technology Standards Panel (HITSP). The HITSP will bring together US Standards Development Organizations (SDOs) and other stakeholders. The HITSP will develop, prototype, and evaluate a harmonization process for achieving a widely accepted and useful set of health IT standards that will support interoperability among health care software applications, particularly EHRs.

3. Compliance Certification Process

HHS awarded a contract valued at \$2.7 million to the Certification Commission for Health Information Technology (CCHIT) to develop criteria and evaluation processes for certifying EHRs and the infrastructure or network components through which they interoperate. CCHIT is a private, non-profit organization established to develop an efficient, credible, and sustainable mechanism for certifying health care information technology products. CCHIT will be required to submit recommendations for ambulatory EHR certification criteria in December 2005, and to develop an evaluation process for ambulatory health records in January 2006. Criteria will include the capabilities of EHRs to protect health information, standards by which EHRs can share health information and clinical features that improve patient outcomes.

4. Privacy and Security Solutions

HHS awarded a contract valued at \$11.5 million to the Health Information Security and Privacy Collaboration (HISPC), a new partnership consisting of a multi-disciplinary team of experts and the National Governor's Association (NGA). The HISPC will work with state and territorial governments to assess and develop plans to address variations in organization-level business policies and state laws that affect privacy and security practices that may pose challenges to interoperable health information

exchange. Overseeing the HISPC will be RTI International, a private, nonprofit corporation who has been selected as the HHS contract recipient.

5. Nationwide Health Information Network

Contracts have been awarded by HHS totaling \$18.6 million to four consortia of health care and health information technology organizations to develop prototypes for the Nationwide Health Information Network (NHIN) architecture. The contracts were awarded to: Accenture, CSC, IBM and Northrop Grumman, along with their affiliated partners and health care market areas. These four consortia will move the nation toward the President's goal of personal electronic health records by creating a uniform architecture for health care information that can follow consumers throughout their lives.

6. Health Information Technology and Health Care Anti-Fraud

The Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology (ONC) is undertaking a project to look at how automated coding software and a nationwide interoperable health information technology infrastructure can address healthcare fraud issues. The project is being conducted through a contract with the Foundation of Research and Education (FORE) of the American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA)

7. Health IT Adoption Initiative

HHS awarded a contract valued in excess of \$1 million to the George Washington University and Massachusetts General Hospital Harvard Institute for Health Policy to support the Health IT Adoption Initiative. The new initiative is aimed at better characterizing and measuring the state of EHR adoption and determining the effectiveness of policies aimed at accelerating adoption of EHRs and interoperability.

8. Proposed Changes to self-referral and anti-kickback rules

HHS announced proposals rules that would ease self-referral and anti-kickback restrictions that many providers say impede adoption of health IT. The two proposals would change how CMS and the Office of the Inspector General enforce the Stark amendment, which prohibits hospitals from giving physicians access to hardware, software or related training. Both of the proposals are published in the October 5, 2005, *Federal Register*.

9. Digital Health Recovery for the Gulf Coast

HHS has entered into agreements with The Southern Governors' Association (SGA) and the State of Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals. Under these agreements, local leaders and national experts will plan for and coordinate the adoption of electronic health records and the development of regional health information sharing in the Gulf States.